



Buzzwords ...

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..... the newsletter for National Beekeepers' Association members

In this issue ...

Buzzwords No 37 December 1991

EUROPEAN FOULBROOD

SPECIAL ISSUE ...



FROM THE EXECUTIVE

At its meeting on Monday, November 11, in response to the European foulbrood emergency, the Executive decided to convene the Bee Disease Advisory Committee (BDAC), consisting of five NBA members and two MAF representatives, Murray Reid and Stephen Ogden.

Until that time Michael Wright (executive member from Nelson) and Dave Haycock (Nelson NBA Branch President) had been holding the fort, assisting MAF with local beekeeper liaison and helping define the gazetted area.

It is a measure of their commitment that all the out-of-town BDAC members (Ian Berry, Alan McCaw and Gavin White) were able to be on the spot in Nelson within 24 hours, despite their own business demands.

The efforts of the two Nelson representatives deserve particular comment. Theirs was an unenviable position. Both Dave and Michael had beehives within the Disease Control Area, and both put in tremendous hours trying to juggle the demands of preparing hives for pollination, liaising with local beekeepers, and taking part in the BDAC. Both of them live over an hour's drive from the Nelson EHQ. Michael and Dave had additional roles in that Michael was responsible for contacting and organising beekeeper inspectors for field teams, and Dave arranged the public meeting of beekeepers. To them, and all the other members of the BDAC, our sincerest thanks.

The Executive would also like to thank two other groups of important people. First, the Nelson beekeepers should be

recognised for their co-operation and assistance throughout the whole affair. They were quick to help in whatever way they could and conducted themselves at the public meeting in a way that should make our whole industry proud.

Second, a big thank you needs to go to all those beekeepers who came to Nelson in response to the request for beekeeper inspectors. For a beekeeper to leave a business at this busy time of year, or to provide staff to assist, requires special commitment to our industry. It also places additional strain on families/partners who must remain at home to run the business. The Executive would like to acknowledge their contribution as well.

Francis Trewby, Executive member

As National President I would like to add my sincere thanks to all those involved in the suspected EFB outbreak. I hope, like all beekeepers, that the final outcome will be that we don't have this harmful disease in our country. Such an outcome would be a fitting tribute for all the hours involved and the sacrifices made by so many people in our industry.

Some people have said to me since I returned home that my timing in going overseas was impeccable. I received the news as I was leaving for the States and I can assure you that I would have liked to have been here to do my bit.

Once again, thanks to all those who took part in the emergency response, and Season's Greetings to all NBA members.

Dudley Ward, President

EFB SPECIAL COVERAGE

The New Zealand beekeeping industry has just experienced one of the most stressful and trying episodes in its long history. And the remarkable thing was that it happened in a way many of us would have joked about in the past, but no one would have predicted – a finding of European foulbrood (EFB) in a mating yard at pollination time.

The finding tested our industry. It tested the beekeepers involved and beekeepers throughout the country. It tested our industry leaders and our association. And equally it tested the MAF apiculture group and the larger government bureaucracy. For me, the results have been by and large heartening. A not insignificant number of heroes came forth, and the villains by and large were few. And while the stress and confusion one always associates with such emergencies led to some mistakes and a great deal of misinformation, I just hope in the next few months beekeepers everywhere will focus on the positive things our industry has gained from the successful handling of the real threat of exotic bee disease.

Cliff Van Eaton, Editor

THE FINDING AND A BRAVE MAN

The initial finding resulted from the sort of beekeeper inquisitiveness which is the key to exotic disease surveillance. Gerard (Ged) Stephens, an up-and-coming queen producer at Richmond, near Nelson, noticed a strange abnormality in one of his mating nucs. Now we all see "funny" things in our hives from time to time, and most of us don't take much notice. But Ged was different. He'd been to Canada and seen European foulbrood firsthand. He wasn't about to write the dead larvae off as "just another case of Halfmoon". Instead he asked Dave Grueber, Livestock Officer, Blenheim, to come and have a look. Dave and Ged took samples and sent them off, as normal, to Dr. Mark Goodwin's diagnostic lab at Ruakura.

Mark and his team process hundreds of samples each year sent in by beekeepers, and by MAF officers as part of the active surveillance programme. Normally such samples can be diagnosed as negative within a matter of hours. But this sample was different. There was a cluster of small,

round objects on one slide which resembled *Melissococcus pluton*, the causative organism of EFB. Mark had just been to visit Dr. Michael Hornitzky, the EFB specialist at the New South Wales Department of Agriculture, and had seen *Melissococcus pluton* first hand, so he was sufficienty concerned to send the sample to Australia. The rest is history. Dr. Hornitzky identified the bacteria as EFB and a full scale Emergency Disease and Pest Response (EDPR) was under way.

The pressure which focused on Ged and his young family was enormous and it must of at times felt like events were running away with him. But Ged hung in there and could be seen daily helping at the Emergency Headquarters (EHQ), offering assistance in tracing apiaries and queens. And so our industry had its first and best hero in the affair. As Merv Elwood, a beekeeper from Brightwater, said in his letter to the editor in the Nelson Evening Mail (18/11/91), Ged "has shown the highest standard of character. This beekeeper has a wife, young family and the usual commitments of a family man. Some of us would have disregarded our suspicions because of this, and swept them under the mat, but not this man. He knew the consequences if his suspicion proved correct and that he stood to lose his livelihood, but he put other beekeepers and the whole industry first. I trust the powers-that-be will compensate him for his honesty, and I'm sure other beekeepers will rally around him and his family at this time." Well said, Merv.

THE MEDIA BLITZ

Once the acting Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO), Dr. Stuart MacDiarmid, announced on November 7 that a suspect EFB sample had been sent to Australia, events, thanks to the media, really did take on a (wild) life of their own. The Nelson MAF office hadn't yet been declared an EHQ because the samples weren't confirmed. But that didn't stop the local papers, national papers, wire service, and the television news from hounding Stephen Ogden and Dave Grueber, the MAF apiculture staff on duty. In the days to follow, the incessant demands for a story (any story, as long as it was negative) taxed MAF's apiculture staff to the limit and made it extremely difficult to set up and run an efficient EHQ.



phoned and told that they were free to move their hives, but were asked to record the movement of hives or apiaries, if possible. The next day, however, a reporter from the Bay of Plenty Times misread his shorthand and reported Alan McCaw as saying "restrict the movement" instead of "record the movement". Talk about confusion.

A headline is worth a thousand words - Beekeepers in Nelson, who had lived with the EDPR and the Disease Control Area, and who had helped with the initial survey teams, were a bit miffed to read a headline in the Nelson Evening Mail on November 18 which read "Beekeeping Practices Criticised". The only problem was the three column report only mentioned such practices in one small sentence, quoting Clive Dalton as saying "the (infected area survey) search turned up some poor beekeeping practices." The report was actually about the survey itself, the NBA open meeting, and the dangers of bringing undeclared honey into the country. Poor Clive caught a lot of abuse for a comment which could apply to anywhere in the country (just ask anyone who has ever taken part in a diseaseathon!) As Clive said in his follow-up article, "we have seen for ourselves that most beekeepers are hard working and conscientious. Our only concern as far as standards go is with the few beekeepers who neglect hives, especially after the pollination season. We don't want this small number putting the rest of the local industry at risk."

SAVED BY THE COMPUTER (NOW WHAT ABOUT THE INFORMATION)

A major difference between this emergency response and the Northland chalkbrood survey in 1984 was the computerised apiary register. Instead of having to search over and over again through arm loads of often outdated manual files, the EHQ registrar, Dave Grueber, was able to immediately print out complete lists for inspection districts around the original Infected Area, and later, the Disease Control Area. These lists were used daily by the Field Team manager, Ted Roberts, to assign survey work for the field teams.

The computer also proved invaluable in processing all the information on bee hives, apiaries, and beekeepers which the public reported to the EHQ. In the chalkbrood survey it would have been impossible to check the records each time someone called to determine whether, say, an apiary was in fact already registered, or whether it needed to be added to the inspection list. With the computer it was as easy as a push of the button. The Registrar was thus able to register beekeepers, change apiary locations, and delete non-existent sites daily and provide new information for the next day's teams.

Still, the computer is only as good as the information that goes into it, and as industry members of the field teams (and anyone who's been on a diseaseathon, for that matter) soon realised, the apiary location details which many beekeepers provide on their annual statements of inspection leave a lot to be desired. Field teams found themselves "leap-frogging" each other in certain inspection districts, and everyone found it frustrating looking for apiaries on farms whose owners had long since changed. Descriptions

of apiary locations on a property also left a lot to be desired (provided the beekeeper actually took the time to fill in that blank). Prize for the wackiest description of an apiary goes to the beekeeper who actually registered the location to a post office box!

Obviously, we need to get a lot more serious about apiary registration requirements if we want to deal effectively with an exotic disease outbreak again. David Penrose made the suggestion of compulsory grid references for every apiary. According to David, that way apiaries could be pin-pointed to the nearest 200 m. As it turns out the apiary computer system already has provision for recording grid references. All it takes now is an initiative from the industry itself (provided we can all come to grips with eastings and northings!).

EFB AND HALFMOON DISORDER

The question on every beekeeper's mind during the events in Nelson was "what does this EFB look like, any way?" A number of you would have consulted your bee books, and if you did you would have read a description more or less identical to what we've been seeing for a number of years in our hives - Half Moon Disorder (HMD). And that's the problem. No one can really tell the difference between these two brood problems unless they look at the dead larvae under a microscope. Inspectors in Nelson found a number of cases of HMD in colonies, but all tested negative for EFB at the EHQ lab. Here is what they saw -

- * Freshly dead larvae twisted in the cell. This can best be described as larvae which have died in the intermediate stage between being coiled up (C-shaped) in the bottom of the cell and laying out prone (prior to pupation) on the bottom side of the cell. The larvae quite often extend in corkscrew shape from the bottom of the cell to the top. This twisted appearance is the reason the problem is called "Half Moon".
- * Straw-yellow coloration. This can sometimes (but not always) be seen in the freshly dead larvae.
- * Veining in the larvae. Again, this can sometimes be seen in the freshly dead larvae, and is actually the outlines of the larva's trachea.
- * Halfmoon scale. The larvae dry down to a scale, which is also twisted in shape. The scale is red-brown to dark brown in colour and can easily be removed from the cell.
- * Peppered brood pattern. In severe cases, so many larvae are effected that the brood pattern takes on a mottled look. Many of the larvae may be removed during house cleaning by the bees.

All the above symptoms hold true for EFB as well. The only noticeable differences are in the additional symptoms associated with HMD, including multiple egg laying and excessive drone brood. Dr. Denis Anderson has exhaustively studied Halfmoon Disorder and now believes that it is a queen problem caused by poor nutrition in the first few days after the queen emerges.



The media also sought out industry leaders, and with Dudley Ward, the NBA president, out of the country, and Gerard Martin, the vice-president, in the midst of pollination and unable to go to Nelson, it was up to members of the Bee Disease Advisory Committee (BDAC) to handle the onslaught. The committee responded to the pressure by appointing Allen McCaw press spokesman. Allen did a wonderful job of speaking for the industry and in one memorable television news clip managed to put to rest several of the media-constructed myths surrounded the event.

Once the EHQ was in place, MAF was also ably served firstly by Jackie van Rooijen, and then by Dr. Clive Dalton from Ruakura. Clive filtered out the incessant press interruptions and let the MAF apiculture staff get on with the essential work of running the disease survey. Clive also started an "in-house" daily newsletter to keep the troops (including the many volunteer beekeepers) up with the play. Clive even managed to get strung (repeatedly) on one photo session out with the bees. He now knows about bees and dark wool socks!

BDAC AND THE MEDIA

I was privileged to be asked to be part of the Bee Disease Advisory Committee during the present EFB emergency response in Nelson. This committee was established as a result of discussions held between industry members and MAF after the 1990 Conference in Blenheim. The committee consists of five beekeepers and two MAF representatives, and was created under provisions laid down by MAF Policy following discussions held between industry members and MAF at the Blenheim Conference.

The committee served in an advisory capacity to the emergency headquarters, providing an important avenue for beekeeper and MAF consultation on a number of issues which have arisen during the emergency. BDAC was involved in the setting of the disease control area boundaries and in policy decisions where applications were received for permits to move hives and products within the control zone. We also attended a meeting with local Nelson beekeepers and have kept the NBA Executive informed of progress throughout the response.

Members of the committee also provided valuable assistance in organising beekeepers from around the South and parts of the North Island for hive inspection teams. As expected, the co-operation from the industry has been outstanding, making the difficult task of having the right numbers available at the right time a little easier. Top marks to Michael Wraight and Dave Haycock for their organisation and efforts with this important task.

One of the most interesting experiences for me has come from dealing with the media. Television, radio and the press have taken a keen interest in proceedings, which at times seemed to be a mixed blessing! It was obvious from the beginning that the media was looking for an "angle", and unfortunately the question of drug treatment and antibiotics in honey received rather more early attention than we would have liked.

One type of enquiry which caused concern at times resulted from comments made by beekeepers who had been approached by the media in their own home district. One classic example was a beekeeper in an outlying area who when asked to comment stated that he had "No comment, because I've found a suspicious hive myself which is being tested at the moment." Talk about a Clayton's Comment!

The result of that comment was the reporter asking EHQ if we could confirm that there had been another "positive sample of EFB" in their area. You must be very careful with any statement, and it is better to say nothing at all than to fuel this sort of speculation.

For the most part, however, the media took a fairly responsible attitude to the suspected outbreak and provided an important link with the wider industry and the general public. What has become clear is the need to present accurate and informed comment to the media from the outset and the NBA should look carefully at the whole question of media liaison for the future.

Alan McCaw, Bee Disease Advisory Committee

MISINFORMATION

Beekeepers all around the country will have been following events in the papers, on radio, and on TV1 and 3. And because we know bees, it was pretty obvious that the reporters kept having problems with those elusive things called "facts". As more than one beekeeper said to me at the time, when something like this that you know something about gets mucked up by the press, it makes you wonder how accurate the rest of the stuff they feed us every night actually is. Here's some of the more important screw-ups-

The famous second hive that wasn't - somebody in the press picked this one up from a "leak" and then ran a bit too far ahead of the cover defence. Yes, there was another suspect sample (the lab found a number of samples which needed a further look), but upon closer examination it turned out to be negative. What was interesting was the fact that the retraction got a lot less air play than the initial second sample story the day before.

The Blenheim hive - I heard this one on Morning Report. It seems a beekeeper in Blenheim found a suspicious larvae in one of his hives and sent it off to Nelson for diagnosis. Now beekeepers all around the country were doing this, but somehow the Radio NZ reporter found out and went straight on air, claiming the disease had spread outside the Disease Control Area. Someone at EHQ caught that one fairly smartly and an announcer read out a retraction on the 8:30 am news.

"Record" becomes "restrict" - the issue of queens from the infected apiary caused a lot of concern, especially in the North Island. Early on, a decision was taken by the Acting CVO (this time Chris Boland) that movement control could not feasibly be carried out because the queens were so widely spread and because some of the recipient beekeepers could not tell which of their hives (or apiaries) contained the queens. All recipient beekeepers were

Needless to say, we all have to be much more diligent in our handling of suspected cases of HMD. Beekeepers everywhere should follow the example of Ged Stephens and send samples of any cases off to their local AAO or Mark Goodwin's lab in Ruakura. The only way to keep EFB out of New Zealand is for all beekeepers to do their part.

HOW WILL IT END?

At this stage it appears the emergency is winding down somewhat, as there have been no further positive results from over a thousand samples taken during hive inspections. It is quite possible that the original diagnosis may be re-evaluated in the light of this survey and other laboratory tests and we must be ready to accept an outcome similar to the Temuka foot and mouth episode in the early '80's. That would be the best possible outcome for our industry and it is important that we view this whole experience in a positive light and that we learn as much as we can from the exercise.

The emergency has highlighted clearly many of the serious implications of an exotic disease introduction, and the short and long term costs which can result.



Above all, it is vitally important that we do not relax our vigilance and support for maintaining our border controls against the importing of honey and bees. The whole question of licensed importing of heat-treated honey should also be reviewed in the light of this emergency, particularly if it weakens the positive awareness amongst the wider public which has resulted from this emergency bee disease response.

Alan McCaw, Bee Disease Advisory Committee

THE MATTER OF COMPENSATION

There is also the matter of compensation for beekeepers such as Ged Stephens who have suffered financially from the emergency response. The Apiaries Act makes no

provision for compensation in relation to EFB, which is classified as a Schedule II disease. However, according to a report in the *Christchurch Press*, the issue of compensation has been discussed at the cabinet level.

"Government Ministers are sympathetic to the idea of compensating Nelson beekeepers affected by the outbreak of European foulbrood disease, says Mr. Nick Smith (Nat, Tasman).

He said yesterday that a decision on possible compensation could not be made until the extent of the outbreak was known. This would not be for several days until all hives throughout the Nelson region had been checked.

Mr. Smith said he had discussed compensation with the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Falloon, and the Associate Minister, Mr. Marshall, and had found them sympathetic. This was particularly because the outbreak was not in any way the fault of the industry but had probably resulted from a failure of frontier checks and the illegal importation of honey.

Compensation would have to come from the supplementary estimates because there was no money available in the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture. Mr. Smith said he was looking for a level of compensation that provided for loss of income as well as for the destruction of infected hives."

It remains to be seen how the government will view this whole issue in the light of the negative survey results. Let's hope certain government ministers look more favourably on our industry this time than they did a few months back.

Christchurch Press, November 16, 1991

HATS OFF TO THE EHQ

On behalf of the beekeepers of New Zealand, the Executive would like to thank all the MAF staff involved with the Emergency Response at Nelson.

Any beekeepers who participated in the response were doubtless impressed with the speed with which the EHQ was set up and with its efficient operation. The duties of EHQ controller and operations manager were shared by Murray Reid and Stephen Ogden. Dave Grueber, Matthew Sole, Ted Roberts, Derek Bettsworth and Cliff Van Eaton were all involved in running the EHQ. They up-dated the Apiaries Register, managed the field teams, followed up the tracing enquiries, and did a thousand other things.

A special thank you also to a group of MAF staff we seldom ever meet, the administration staff. Without these people the whole affair would have been a shambles. First aid kits to fire extinguishers, meals to microscopes. Smoker fuel to shovels, telephones to transport. You name it, they arranged it. Not an easy task at the best of times, and a great effort given the number of people involved and the dozens of odd bits of equipment we seemed to need.

The people with whom the beekeeper inspectors had the most contact were the field team leaders. A number of



beekeepers mentioned how impressed they were with the way they performed their tasks. They were highly skilled in working with landowners and the beekeepers whose hives were being inspected, and did a great job with the paper work. They also had the job of preparing the thousands of slides for examination.

Those thousands of slides prepared in the field were studied and assessed by another group of MAF people, the lab team headed by Dr. Mark Goodwin. Theirs was probably the hardest job of all. They had to peer down a microscope all day, looking at larval smears, knowing that the future of our industry was in their hands.

Francis Trewby, Executive member

*** STOP PRESS ***

Here's an update on the current situation as at 26 November. Field inspection teams were stood down on Tuesday, November 19, following the results of a bacterial culture on the original sample (carried out in Australia) and no further findings in the field.

Over 1000 field samples were taken and checked under the microscope and further culturing of material was carried out at DSIR Mt. Albert, MAF Lynfield, and the Nelson EHQ lab. All results were negative for *Melissococcus pluton*. A further forty or so suspect smears were sent to Dr. Hornitzky in Australia on November 21 for final checking. However, these samples are also expected to be negative for the disease.

A meeting in Wellington is scheduled for December 4, where representatives from MAFQual, MAF Policy, and the Bee Disease Advisory Committee will consider findings from the survey and lab work. Based on this information the meeting will decide on a policy regarding the lifting of the Disease Control Area (which currently remains in force). If the Disease Control Area is lifted, all affected beekeepers will be advised as soon as possible.

MAF Quality Management

SOUTHLAND FIELD DAY

The Southland Field Day, one of the best field day's on the beekeeping calendar, will be held this summer on Saturday, February 1. The venue is yet to be decided, but the Southland branch is giving this advanced notice so that you can make sure to keep this date free.

AMERICAN FOULBROOD FUNDING

What follows is the concluding section of an article by NBA president Dudley Ward published in the last issue of The Apiarist Advertiser. This section was inadvertently left out.

The Future

New Zealand has traditionally led the world in disease control. Our industry was the first to put in place an Act of Parliament to regulate for disease control. We have maintained a bee health status that is the envy of most of the rest of the world. All this is now under threat!

In order for MAF to budget for the traditional disease control programme for next year they require assurance that funding will be available. In order to give this assurance the National Beekeepers Association is currently asking the Minister to grant approval in principle to effectively double the hive levy paid by commercial beekeepers as at 1 January 1993. This will enable us to assure MAF that funding will be available regardless of whether a levy order is successfully in place before then or not. In other words it provides a backstop.

Currently Federated Farmers are negotiating with Government for changes to policy on the granting of levy orders in order to make it possible to obtain an order. We await the outcome of these negotiations with interest.

At its December meeting the National Beekeepers Association executive will decide on the most appropriate way of funding our national endemic disease control programme. We will be forced to revisit the following questions:

- 1) Should the levy base be the hive or the apiary?
- 2) Should all beekeepers pay at least a minimum charge if so is this practical and enforceable?
- 3) Is the Commodity Levies Act useful to our industry or should we explore changes to the Hive Levy Act with a reduction in the "cut in" level from 50 to 5 or even 1 hive?

The National Beekeepers Association has consistently maintained that the endemic disease control programme, which our predecessors fought so hard to put in place for us, should be maintained.

We have now well and truly arrived at "crunch time". Whether we all continue to enjoy the protection afforded by this programme will have to be decided this coming year.

I would ask that you all think about these matters, discuss them in hobbyist clubs, at branch meetings and with your mates. If you have any constructive ideas please send them to me at PO Box 4048, Wellington, before the 10th December. The Executive will give all ideas consideration in its attempt to do the best for the whole industry.

Dudley Ward, President

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